

## Portable Suction Dredges

The purpose of the Portable Suction Dredge General Permit (General Permit) is to regulate wash water effluent from portable suction dredges, to state waters in accordance with effluent limitations, monitoring requirements and other conditions set forth in Parts I, II, III and IV of the General Permit. A written authorization letter from the Department is required before an applicant is authorized to discharge under the General Permit.

The Portable Suction Dredge General Permit is in compliance with the Montana Water Quality Act, Title 75, Chapter 5, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (the "Clean Water Act"), 33 U.S.C. 1251 et. seq.,

The Water Protection Bureau is working in conjunction with the Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks (DFWP) to identify issues of interruption of habitat and biological cycles of aquatic life caused by recreational suction dredging. The following is a list supplied by DFWP showing stream classifications that affect accessibility and restrictions for recreational suction dredging. <http://fwp.mt.gov/content/getItem.aspx?id=33543>

To obtain a recreational suction dredge discharge permit the following conditions apply:

- DEQ will permit only after a 310 permit is issued by the county conservation district for the disturbance to the stream segment. You must submit a copy of the 310 permit with the suction dredge application.
- DEQ will not issue permits on stream segments classified by DFWP as closed.
- DEQ will process permits for stream segments classified by DFWP as unlimited or restricted.
- DEQ will include the seasonal restriction from the DFWP recreational suction dredging guidelines list in the permit.

Permit applications must identify specific waters to be worked so DEQ can determine what restrictions will be required to protect fisheries. Each authorization letter will specify the segment(s) of a stream, river, or lake where a dredge can be operated, and at what times. Seasonal restrictions, such as allowing dredging only from July 1 through August 31, are common. The Department may authorize amendments to the designated work area if the applicant requests it in writing.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issues authorization letters that allows the use of portable suction dredges under conditions of the General Permit. Suction dredges with inside diameters of 4 inches or less can be authorized under the GP. Operation of a larger suction dredge requires authorization under an individual MPDES discharge permit. To operate under the General Permit, an authorization letter and a copy of the GP must be onsite at all times. Dredges must not be used to cut into or undercut stream banks or used in any way that could cause bank caving, measurable erosion of banks, or loss of bank stabilizing vegetation. Chemical addition for enhancement of mineral recovery is prohibited.

There must be no discharge that produces a visible oil or petroleum sheen in the receiving stream. Care must be taken to prevent spilled or leaking fuels or lubricants from entering

waters. There must be no discharge of floating solids or visible foam in other than trace amounts.

An authorization letter permitting dredging under the portable suction dredge GP does not eliminate a permittee's obligation to obtain other permits that may be required, depending on location. Local conservation districts issue 310 permits for suction dredging under the Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act. Contact the conservation district with jurisdiction in the area where dredging is planned. A list of conservation district telephone numbers and addresses is available at:

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/cardd/consdist/CD%20directory%202007.pdf>. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) may require a water use permit for withdrawal from a stream; contact the DNRC Appropriations Program Manager at 406-444-6601. The Forest Service may require a permit and plan of operations for suction dredging on Forest Service land; contact the USFS Regional Minerals Office at 406-329-3565, or a Ranger District office. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) may require a permit for dredging on BLM lands; contact the BLM at 406-494-5059. The US Corps of Engineers may require a Section 10 permit for dredging in sections of the Missouri, Yellowstone, or Kootenai Rivers. The Corps may be contacted at 406-441-1375.